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The Growth of the Church

James Quinn

The Life of Jesus

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

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Welcome Support

For the adequate formation of adult inquirers "the restoration of the parish catechumenate is not merely advisable. It is essential." This was the conviction expressed by experienced catechist, Mrs. Frank A. Serio, at the second annual Northeast Seminarians Study Conference held at St. Mary's Seminary, Roland Park, Baltimore, last August.

From her ripe experience, she learned that as a result of the customary hurried, individual, antiquated instructions "there are many who easily slip into the Church without any great or deep sense of commitment." She discovered that such a preparation, "with no living experience to make it real, with no developing sense of community through shared experience . . . is an impoverished preparation" that fails to convey any deep awareness "of the demands of the Christian vocation."

For her, *aggiornamento* in the parish mission means a catechumenate. The ancient catechumenate adapted to modern inquirers is "carefully planned to meet their evolving needs and growing receptivity." And she wisely advises that its format must vary, depending on "the parish itself—its location, the vitality of the parish and its degree of sophistication in liturgical celebration." However, she does recommend five elements as being important, if not essential:

1. Time Element: a weekly assembly for one year, better still for eighteen months or two years.
2. Active participation in community worship.
3. Study of the Gospels to precede study of the catechism.
4. Promotions (or graded steps) every three months.
5. Public Baptism or reception, preceding Mass with First Communion at Mass. "The Church is not an organization that one joins," she reminded the seminarians, "but a life one lives. The parish catechumenate is a far better way to bring them to that more abundant life."

The full text of her penetrating paper, along with other extraordinarily good talks by American and European experts in catechetics, is available in the NSSC Proceedings.

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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The Growth of the Church

James Quinn

*The Dynamic Element in the Church.
Areas, Conditions and Means of Growth.*

"What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like a mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his garden: and it grew to be a tree and the birds came to roost among its branches." *Luke. Ch. 13:18-19*

"So we shall all at last attain . . . to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ . . . so shall we fully grow up in Christ."

Eph. Chap. 13

The Church grows in silence, as it were by stealth, through the mysterious leavening of grace. The Church is always more than she seems to be, for her real growth remains a secret hidden from the eyes of men. The graph of grace is the only true measure of that growth, and only the eyes of faith can discern, however imperfectly, the workings of the holy Spirit within the Church.

The growth of the Church is corporate rather than individual, though it is neither without the other, for the Church is before all else the mystical body of Christ. At a very different level, it is a social growth, developing within the living world of human relationships. Inevitably, therefore, our human judgments about the Church reflect our judgments about human life: we tend erroneously to assess her growth in terms of numbers, influence and efficiency.

An evaluation of this kind may be a valu-

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able pointer to real growth, to areas of the Church's life where the tide of grace is flowing strongly. But true growth lies always at a much deeper level than these superficial and human judgments suggest, for the Church is more than a social phenomenon, however massive in scale, more than a business empire of however unworldly a kind. The Church rides serene above such verdicts, which leave untouched her essential nature. She remains inscrutable to any purely human judgment.

The Church grows through the flowering of her supernatural qualities: true growth is always in her case growth in faith or hope or charity, and nothing less. Yet grace works through nature, and so pervades the whole of human life and conduct, leavening each part of it. This means that, though the Church's growth lies entirely within the domain of grace, it is possible for the man of faith to feel in some sense the motion and swell of grace, and so to chart its currents. To do this he must be sensitive to those areas where true growth is to be looked for; he must know too the conditions which make growth possible, and the means by which in fact maturity is achieved.

Human life and conduct in all its rich variety is the harvest-field of grace. No aspect of man's relationship with God or with nature is excluded from the maturing influence of grace, and so from the possibility of growth. There is strictly no line of demarcation dividing areas of growth from areas of non-growth.

VISIBLE AREAS OF GROWTH

Yet it is possible to select four broad areas of the Church's life where the opportunities for growth show themselves most clearly, and so can be studied most fruitfully. These areas in the life of the Church correspond to parallel areas in the life of the individual. Just as the individual in growing to full maturity must develop physically, morally, intellectually and spiritually, so too the Church must follow a similar pattern of growth. She must grow to full stature as a mature community, even of the strictly supernatural order, through a balanced and harmonious development in all these areas.

In the first place, the Church must grow

physically, in numbers. Until she reaches full stature at the end of time, she must in every generation receive her due increase, an increase which, in the plan of God, knows no boundaries other than those of the human race. The Church is potentially and by vocation co-extensive with the human family. Her limit of physical growth is never less than the whole of mankind.

The missionary impulse of the Church at home and abroad, wherever she may be, is therefore basic to her vocation. The physical map of the Church is indeed one of the most striking things about her; to the superficial observer the physical expansion of the Church may seem to be the most important aspect of her growth, perhaps even its only aspect. But growth in numbers may be accompanied by a decline in other areas where maturity is even more vital. There would certainly be decline instead of growth if the Church placed more store on numbers than on the adult quality of the Christian lives of her members. The Church could be physically an adult but in other respects an adolescent or an infant.

MORAL MATURITY

To be mature, the Church must also grow morally. She must grow not only in sheer numbers but also in moral stature and so in influence. The influence she seeks is not her own prestige but the pressure of God's grace upon the counsels of the world. Her sphere of influence is the entire world, and the whole course of the world's history. To fulfil her task in the moral order she must educate the world's conscience by her own example of large-hearted charity and genuine compassion. To form the world's conscience she must also be ahead of the world's needs. Her social teaching must confront intelligently the problems of the day, but it must also seek to guide the social history of the future by foreseeing its developing pattern.

The Church's growth includes therefore for its due balance a maturity of intelligence. To live as adult Christians we must live intelligently in the real world, of nature as well as of grace. Too often we are content to live in the world of grace alone, forgetting that our growth in grace depends among other things on our service of God

the real world of nature. This too is God's world: the world of technology, of psychiatry, of public relations, of culture, of commerce; a world that is based in the last analysis on the raw material of all sanctity, human relationships. This is the world that we are called to live in and to sanctify. To be mature as Christians we must seek to make the world of nature one with the world of grace. There is in fact but one world, God's world.

The Church must above all grow spiritually. This is the goal of all development within the Church, leading to the very source and crown of the Christian life, divine charity itself. The Church is essentially a communion of saints. The vocation of the Church is to make the whole world—of nature and of grace—one single temple of God's glory, wherein he dwells and wherein he is adored. The whole of creation, natural and supernatural, and every aspect of life and thought and activity, are caught up into his vocation. This is the very reason for creation's existence.

It is the Church alone which enables creation to achieve its purpose, for she alone is the reconciling instrument of Christ in the world. The whole universe becomes articulate in Christ and in his Church. Through him and through his Church the whole creation is enabled to join in the new canticle of adoration and love for which it was called into being.

THE CONDITIONS OF GROWTH

If these are the broad areas of growth, what are the conditions under which real growth is possible? The greatest single factor governing growth is surely the Church's spiritual awareness of herself, her understanding of what she really is, and of what her vocation is in time and in eternity.

What is the Church? She is the divine mystery which enshrines the love of God in the world, cherishing that love and returning it to its source in the bosom of the eternal Father. Hers is therefore a vocation of adoration in love, of love in adoration. Whatever else she may feel called to do, if she fails in this she fails in all. She is the embodiment of divine love. Within her flows the current of divine life, in the sacramental signs of love and no less in

the immense riches that she bears within her in those charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit which too often go unrecognized and are yet so necessary for her spiritual maturity.

She must be aware too of her mission to the world. She is the servant of the world, ministering to the world the spiritual bounty of God's grace. When she speaks only for herself, she is untrue to herself; if she is to be herself, her voice must speak for all mankind. There is decline instead of spiritual growth and vigor when the Church fails to see herself as always and everywhere and uniquely the mystery of divine love outpoured upon the world. When she turns in upon herself, she denies her vocation of universal love. When she forgets to speak the language of divine love and uses only dry judicial tones, she belies herself and her origins. Only when she sees herself for what she is can she grow into what God means her to be: the perfect sign that reveals God's love to all mankind.

INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

The Church must therefore be aware of what is human and transitory in her life. Inevitably, as an institution, she reflects and incorporates the human, social values of each age. The human situation is the very fabric of her life. She must in consequence be ever on her guard, refusing to allow herself to be fettered by merely human values. There is always need for her to stand apart from the world in which she must live and in which she must fulfil her divine vocation. She must maintain the absolute sovereignty of her own divine standards. It is the very condition of renewal and of growth that the Church should be spiritually aware of her separation from the world.

The Church can grow to full maturity only if she is in undisputed control within her own domain, completely free from outside constraint. Equally, within her own borders the spirit of freedom must prevail. Freedom is the adult's privilege, and a basic condition for moral and spiritual maturity. If the Church is to grow morally and spiritually to her full stature, she must be supremely the mistress of her own choices,

poised and balanced. She must also educate her subjects in the right use of freedom, and in its true meaning. True freedom is adult freedom, freedom from undue pressure from within the community and from outside it.

Freedom is one of man's chief glories, in the realm of nature as in the realm of grace. Man is not fully man unless he is truly free. Freedom is born of personality; without it, all that is characteristic of man cannot come to flower. It is the prime condition of personal integrity, just as it is the basic requirement of faith. It flourishes within the framework of responsibility, which alone gives it meaning. True freedom respects the personal discipline, the community vigilance, that enable it to be adult freedom. The greatest proof of adult freedom in a community, whether religious or social, is a sound public opinion, which is also its greatest safeguard. While unrestricted liberty or unreasonable constraint is always damaging to human dignity, an intelligent, balanced and freely expressed public opinion can never degrade it. The spirit of adult freedom is the cleansing wind that blows refreshingly through a healthy commonwealth.

CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

Freedom, however, and especially spiritual freedom, must always be seen within the context of divine Providence, within the context too of ecclesiastical authority. The freedom which the Church must promote among her members is mature spiritual freedom, which recognizes the claims of spiritual authority. The Church is rightly described as a servant, but her authority is nonetheless real: a God-given authority, not usurped. Her servant-status means only, in this context, that her authority is a gift to her for the sake of others, not for self-advantage. But she must, because her authority is real, claim obedience, even—and especially—from free men. If true freedom lies, as it does, in the development of one's whole personality along the lines that God has laid down, obedience becomes not only a service of God; it is also a service to oneself. It is the highway to the discovery of one's true self. And we must remember, in examining the relation between authority

and freedom, that not all God's children, perhaps not many, are completely adult, especially in matters of the faith.

Growth in freedom means also the quest of an ever larger freedom of the mind, and with it the courage to follow truth wherever it may lead, with the unshakeable conviction that it cannot contradict the faith. Perhaps the greatest fear today is fear of the intellect; precisely because it is fear it is also a danger to growth. The courage that springs from mature freedom in the faith is its antidote. From the serenity born of faith and courage comes an attitude of openness and receptivity which is itself an important condition of growth.

PROVIDENTIAL MOMENTS

This attitude of openness is flexible, not static; outward-looking, not complacent; desirous of growth, not simply intent on preservation. It implies a readiness, indeed a desire, to use any situation as a providential situation, offering opportunities for growth. All situations, in fact, because they are governed by God's providence, are opportunities for growth, but we have to recognize each for what it really is. It is the attitude of spiritual openness, of intelligent alertness, that enables us to see the ever-present potentialities for good that lie all about us, awaiting recognition.

When we are confronted with a situation that seems fraught with danger to the faith, we may take up either of two attitudes. We may ask ourselves: How are we to safeguard the faith in this situation? Or we may ask ourselves: How are we to enrich the faith precisely through this situation? The first attitude diagnoses a crisis, the second an opportunity. Often the path of danger lies, not in venturing forward with a prudent trust in divine Providence, but in living always in the past. If the Church is a sign to the world, our constant question must be: How are we to make the Church more clearly a sign to the contemporary world? It is this attitude that has enabled the Church in our own day to gain spiritually from the tragedy of disunity. The result has been a creative renewal throughout Christendom, an enrichment of classical theology and the development of a whole new ascetical theology of spiritual ecumenism.

We turn now to consider the means of the Church's growth. How does the Church grow? We might phrase the question differently and ask: How does the Church become aware of herself and of her mission in the contemporary situation, and able therefore to exploit that situation as a growth situation?

In general, there are two very different ways which lead to this self-awareness on the part of the Church. Both are necessary because they correspond to two essential, complementary truths about the Church. The first is the way of disengagement from the world; the other is its direct opposite, the way of active engagement in the concerns of the real world.

CONTEMPLATIVE CHURCH

The first corresponds to the contemplative nature of the Church. The Church must keep turning aside from the world's tumult into a desert place, where she can hear the voice of God addressing her in the stillness. There is, of course, a danger if the Church finds the desert too congenial and remains in more or less permanent retreat from the world. This would be a source of decline rather than of growth. Even if the Church were to stay in the desert to do vicarious penance and make intercession on behalf of the world, she would be failing in her duty of preaching to the world and of reconciling the world to God. She would then be God's reluctant prophet, a latterday Jonah.

At this point we may well ponder the paradox of the contemporary good samaritan, the atheist who practises, however selectively, the Christian virtues, and feels a Christian anguish for the travail of the world. In cynical moments one is tempted to think that the social conscience is more highly developed in humanists than in Christians, as if it varied in inverse proportion to the religious conscience. Whatever truth there is in this, there is at least this amount of truth, that it is a paradox, and therefore an indictment of the Church if she refuses to be morally an adult, with an adult's sense of social responsibility. It is unfortunately true that some Christians practise what we may call a purely 'clerical' Christianity. Their spiritual horizons

are the sanctuary and the sacristy, and they show no concern for the world that waits outside: the world of poverty and cruelty and injustice, of loneliness and lovelessness and famine of the spirit. Yet this is their parish, the parish of the world.

The second way of self-awareness for the Church is her active and intelligent engagement with the world. The Church's vocation is not only contemplative but active. To grow in a balanced way she must live and work and pray and be in anguish in the midst of the world. The Church must listen to the judgments made by the world, perhaps too casually, about herself, and, with greater wisdom, about the world's needs. She must try to assess their value, not by the world's standards but in the light of her own self-understanding. In this dialogue with the world, the most valuable of all the world's statements may well be the unspoken criticism of contemptuous unconcern.

FALSE COMPROMISE

There could be, however, too great a desire on the Church's part to meet the world on its own terms. The problem of communication with the world must be solved legitimately. There are different ways of compromise, some more insidious than others. Essential statements of belief can be made deliberately more vague. Doctrine can be played down, and undue emphasis placed on activism, even in a good cause. These are clearly ways of decline. Perhaps the most insidious of all is the corrosive influence of 'ethical' Christianity, more dangerous than open scandal. This is the Christianity which thinks only in terms of moral and intellectual growth, and in practice equates the Christian message with the social gospel. It flourishes in many disguises, even—though not characteristically—within the Catholic Church. It is in fact an outwardly respectable but completely bogus Christianity, living at the level of natural goodness and social responsibility, a high enough level in all conscience but not the Christian level of grace. It spells the gradual decay of Christianity. Doing good, caring for human needs, is an important and essential part of Christianity; but Christian goodness, in order to be Christian good-

ness, must spring from supernatural faith and hope and charity. The growth of the whole man, of the whole community, of the whole world, depends ultimately on true supernatural sanctity, not just on moral goodness. Christian goodness is not an indiscriminate free-floating goodness practised for its own sake and for the sake of happiness on this earth; it is firmly anchored in the supernatural destiny of the world.

The Church's dialogue with the world involves listening to adult, contemporary questions addressed to the Church by the world, an intelligent world that will not be put off with superficial answers. This is a very different kind of dialogue from the silent dialogue with God in the desert of contemplation, though it too is ultimately a dialogue with the same God. This kind of dialogue takes place in the shock of conflict. The conflict may arise in different quarters: from the hostile world outside the Church, from the world of the good pagan, from the world of separated Christians. The shock of conflict may arise too within the Church itself, where questions may be asked which seem scandalous to ears unattuned to the new phenomenon of dialogue within the Church.

DEEPER INSIGHTS

Conflict, from whatever source it may arise, is always capable of generating new insights into the real meaning of the Church. It can do so in either of two ways: by forcing the Church to re-assert her teaching, with a deeper understanding of her reasons for it, or by compelling her to re-examine her position from an entirely new standpoint. Every situation, even—and perhaps especially—a situation of conflict, is potentially, under Providence, a growth situation. But it needs intelligence and faith and moral courage on the part of the Church if there is to be spiritual growth through the shock of conflict.

The point at which the Church and the world meet is therefore the point of growth or the point of decline. Decline sets in when the Church is culpably unaware of the possibilities of growth, or—what is less likely—deliberately refuses the opportunity for growth. There is danger on two fronts:

when the Church is either too immersed in her own world (or what she imagines to be her own world) to listen to the voices outside it, or when she is too immersed in the dialogue with the world to remember what manner of person she is. The Church, if she is to grow to full stature, must be at once conservative and adventurous, contemplative and active, inward-looking and outward-reaching. If she is all of these she could be standing on the threshold of the most exciting chapter in her history.

WORLD GUARDIANSHIP

What is the true relationship between the Church and the world? Many Christians today speak of the alienation of modern culture from Christ, and try to construct a 'religionless' Christianity to solve the problem of the breakdown in communications between the Church and the world. Whatever may be said of this particular approach to a solution, the place of the Church is in a very real sense 'in the world'. The world is the place of the Church's mission. It is therefore the place where the Church must be found, and is in fact found, perhaps in stranger forms than we think, for grace does not always flow through orthodox channels. This much we can say: there may indeed—and perhaps must be—alienation of the world from the Church, but there must be no alienation of the Church from the world.

There is, however, a very much deeper sense in which the Church must be in the world. The world has in fact been given over to Christ. On every title it is his, made for him, made to be one in him. The Church must be in the world to claim the world for Christ and for herself.

Is there here a confusion between nature and grace? Is not nature the realm of the world, and grace the realm of the Church? There is, of course, a radical distinction between nature and grace, but at the same time there is a very intimate connection. The distinction between them may not be drawn in such a way that they form two empires sealed against each other. They are rather two dimensions of the same life. And both dimensions are the concern of the Church. We must not forget, as we so often forget with our heads in the spiritual clouds,

at the work of Christ—and with it the work of the Church—extends throughout creation. The Christian vocation demands not only the formal adoration of God but the implicit adoration that ascends to God from a conscious reverence for nature and responsible use of nature's resources.

The Christian assumes for Christ the guardianship of the world. Not, of course, in a political sense but in a moral and spiritual sense. He must show his reverence for Christ's world by his concern for the controlled and intelligent development of the whole world and its potentialities. He is the guardian too of human dignity, of all human values and institutions, and of the society of all peoples. These are conditions of his growth in Christ, and of the growth of the Church. Nature will always remain nature, but man's attitude to it and his guardianship of it form important ele-

ments in his supernatural service of God.

The world of nature is caught up by Christ into the world of grace by his consecration of it to his heavenly Father. The Christian joins with Christ in offering the world of nature to the Father in the perfection of all natural relationships, between person and person, and between persons and the world in which they live. This is the beginning of growth, which reaches its high point with the fulfilment of all vocations within the universe, when the world in its totality and plenitude, the world of nature and the world of grace, is handed over by Christ to his Father. Meanwhile, the sovereignty of all that is belongs to Christ but its guardianship he has made over to his Church. The account of her stewardship will be the measure of her growth. ■ ■ ■

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Write:
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Pre-Catechumenate Instructions

The Life of Jesus

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

Significant Events in the Life of Jesus Which Every Inquirer Should Know.

At the center of Christianity stands the person of Jesus, the Christ. The Catholic Church and the faith and hopes of Catholics exist because of him. If you were to take away Jesus, the Church would disappear and there would no longer be any reason for people to be Catholic. Everything we believe as Catholics depends upon him. That is how central Jesus is. He is described by his followers in the Gospels by certain important things he said and did. We will look first at what he did.

JESUS' BIRTH

► Reading from Lk. 2:1-20.

Jesus was born in humble circumstances in Bethlehem, Palestine, around the year 7 B.C. (the confusing thing about this date comes from the fact that our present calendar which dates years from the birth of Jesus took the wrong year as a starting point). The Roman Emperor was taking a census of his subjects at the time and this is what brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. The Gospels describe great signs and happenings in the heavens when Jesus

was born. This was not quite as startling to the Jews of that time as it would be to us because they knew that God in the past had sometimes identified his special messengers in this way. They remembered the strange things that happened at the birth of John the Baptist, and further back in their history, there was Isaac and Samuel and Sampson. So, Mary and Joseph knew right from the beginning that her son was someone destined by God for great things. The shepherds also were aware from what they saw and heard that this was a child who would be favored by God in special ways.

Even more remarkable than his birth was his conception.

► Reading from Lk. 1:26:38.

Jesus' mother was a virgin. Again, this

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Your candid comments will be appreciated, so that revisions will benefit by your opinions and suggestions.

was not as baffling to the Jews then as it is to us, because they had experienced the power of God often in their history and they knew that remarkable things often accompanied the conception as well as the birth of a messenger of God. Some remembered how Elizabeth had conceived John the Baptist after years of sterility and how their ancestral father Abraham, late in life, was blessed by the birth of a son. This was all part of Mary's religion. She knew that God could do anything and that her son would be great in the eyes of God. She probably recognized that he was to be the Messiah promised by God to establish the promised kingdom for his people. And so, in her deep faith and trust in God, she agreed to be the mother of Jesus, and God directly created the child within her. There was no human father and this raised questions for Joseph, which were finally answered only through prayer and the strength of God's assurances.

There is practically nothing known about the early life of Jesus until he began to preach publicly to the people. The reason for this is that the men who wrote the gospels were mainly concerned with Jesus' public career. They were part of this portion of his life and what they saw and heard is what he told them to repeat to the world.

BAPTISM AND DESERT SOJOURN

► Reading from Lk. 3:21-3.

John the Baptist preached the need for men to repent of their sins and to be baptized as a sign of their determination to be clean. This was only the beginning of what we know today as the sacrament of baptism. The ceremony was similar, but the effect on the person is entirely different. Jesus was baptized, not that he needed to repent of anything, but in order to set an example of repentance to the people.

► Reading from Lk. 4:1-15.

God's prophets had often gone out in the desert to prepare for their work by a period of prayer and fasting. So, before Jesus begins his life work he, too, prepares in this traditional way. The devil is curious about him and suspecting that he is very impor-

tant in God's plans, he tries to distract him from his task. Jesus sends him packing.

THE APOSTLES AND JESUS' MINISTRY

► Reading from Mt. 4:18-25.

The Gospels recount many of the things which Jesus said and did in some detail. What they were and how they struck the people we will look at later on. In this short outline of Jesus' life we will go on to the next significant events.

SUFFERINGS AND DEATH

We come now to the most important events in the life of Jesus, viz., the Last Supper he held with his apostles, followed by his arrest, sufferings, death and burial and their tremendous aftermath:—his return to life, the visits with his followers, and finally, his ascension into heaven. These occupy a good portion of the gospels because they were recognized to be the real point to the life and work of Jesus. What their importance is we will see a little later after we have examined them some more. For the moment, listen to the account of the events.

► Reading from Mk. 14:12-25.

The last supper was not just a farewell dinner. These events took place at the Passover time and in holding the supper, Jesus and his followers, like the good Jews that they were, were actually observing the Passover according to the Law of Moses. They sat down at table and recalled all that God had done for his people in the past. Then Jesus did something new for them when he gave them bread and wine and declared it to be his flesh and blood. He also promised something for the future: a day would come when they would banquet again in the Kingdom of heaven.

The Passover observance called for a ritual meal to be held in each home. The rules were very specific. The head of the family was to recount to the others what God had done for his people in their liberation from Egypt. Then they passed the cup

around for a sacred 'toast' in memory of these things. The food they were to eat was always the same in order to remind them of the meal their ancestors had eaten in haste when God's angel 'passed over' Egypt on the eve of their escape.

This is what Jesus and his apostles were doing at the Last Supper and he surprised them by giving it a new direction when he spoke of "a new covenant" and the meal as his "body and blood." The supper was both old and new. It contained traditional elements that were familiar and some startling new ones.

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION TO JESUS

► Reading from Mk. 14:26-15:41.

The decision of the priests and leaders of the people to get rid of Jesus was not something they thought up on the spur of the moment. Right from the beginning, he had been a thorn in their side, with his public criticism of their greed and hypocrisy. They did not take kindly either, to his broad and humane approach to the Sabbath laws and other legalisms. They saw him as a real threat to their position and authority, and as his influence with the people grew, they knew their days of lording it over the people were numbered. So they decided to get rid of him. Naturally, they had to have reasons. Convinced that he was a troublemaker—someone who was making trouble, at least for them,—they rationalized that for the good of the people he had to go. Like certain officials in the South, they suddenly became very much concerned with the public safety and order and imagined all sorts of terrible things happening if this man continued to operate. Having come to this decision, they enlisted the help of Judas, one of the apostles who shared their sentiments, and this is how Jesus came into their hands.

However, again like Alabama law officers, they wanted everything to be legal, so the farce of a trial was held and they finally convicted Jesus of blasphemy, after he quite truthfully identified himself with God.

Pilate was the Roman governor of Palestine, which at that time was an occupied country. The Jewish leaders had to go to him because the Romans reserved the power of life and death to themselves. Pilate obviously was not very interested in all the fuss and seems to have been convinced that Jesus was really innocent, but he was cowardly and when they threatened to report him to the Emperor for lining up with a royal pretender, he gave up and let them have their way. His name is forever connected in the Christian Creed with the death of Jesus—something he was too cowardly to prevent.

Jesus was crucified like a common criminal in the place of execution—'Golgotha' or 'Calvary.' This looked like the end of everything and all the hopes which the Apostles had built up around him disappeared and they abandoned him.

► Reading from Mk. 15:42-47

Jesus definitely died on the Cross. The soldier in charge of the execution checked this before he left the hill. The legs of the others were broken to speed up their dying, but when he went to do this to Jesus, he discovered that he was already dead. Instead, he stabbed his spear into Jesus' side to make sure. Then some of the disciples asked Pilate to release the body for burial. He did this after checking to make sure Jesus had died, and they buried him.

RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

► Reading from Mt. 28:1-10.

The women came around on Sunday morning because they hadn't had time to prepare the body properly for burial after he was taken down from the cross. The Sabbath began at sunset on Friday and Jesus died in mid-afternoon, so they had just time to put his body in the tomb. The law of Moses forbade them to do any work on the Sabbath and, furthermore, a Jew was obliged to go through all kinds of purifications after touching a dead body. So, after the Sabbath ended, the women came out to the grave to do what they ordinarily would have done right after he died. To

their great joy they discovered that he had been restored to life as he had promised, and he spoke with them and reassured them.

• Reading from Acts 1:1-11.

Thereafter, he visited with the Apostles and disciples over a period of forty days, reviewing the things he had taught them

and letting them absorb the significance of what had happened. When they got adjusted to the fact that he was truly real and that he had broken out of death, their faith in him was restored and strengthened. Then he prepared to return to his Father. He took them out on a hill and ordered them to carry on his mission of teaching and baptizing, and then disappeared from their midst for the last time.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

*What is the place of Jesus in the Catholic faith?
Is the virgin birth of Jesus impossible to believe?
What did John the Baptist have to do with Jesus?
Why would anyone like Jesus make enemies?
What opposition should Christians expect today?
Would Jesus have been more successful if he hadn't been crucified?
How does Jesus' resurrection change a person's view of life?*

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY:

*"Jesus and His Times"—Henri Daniel-Rops (Image Books)
"The Person of Christ"—Wilfrid F. Dewan, C.S.P.
(Paulist Doctrinal Pamphlet)*

UNITY IN CHRIST

Christ's birth was the beginning of the divine ecumenical movement intended to bring men back together with one another, and mutually with God—all this through common unity in Christ. United to Christ we become united to each other, with Christ as the point of union; united to Christ we become united to God, for Christ is God. This is why Christ came into the world, this is the purpose of the Bethlehem manger.

Salvation History
Neal M. Flanagan, O.S.M.

THE HUMAN PERSON

These two recurring themes, solidarity with all men and dialogue within the Church, are rooted in a doctrine which was the underlying preoccupation of the whole Council, even though no document deals with it expressly: the doctrine of man. Christian anthropology has moved to the center of theological preoccupation at the Council.

The crucial issue of our time is the question about myself and about my neighbor, or more correctly, it is the question about my neighbor—for in discovering who he is, I come to know who I am. The two themes of renewal mentioned above, which pervade the conciliar teaching, are deeply rooted in a new appreciation of the dignity of the human person.

This deeper appreciation, in the light of the Gospel, of human personhood had far-reaching effects on all theological and pastoral issues. It is not too much to say that the whole understanding of the Christian religion is becoming more personal. A clear manifestation of this is the new presentation of liturgy with its emphasis on the celebration of the Word. God acts on us primarily as Voice, as living self-communication, as He Who addresses us in His Son. The same tendency is found in the understanding of the ecclesiastical society as a communion of persons.

The same shift to the greater appreciation of the person is found in the renewal of moral theology, which the council did not undertake, but on which it stumbled when it came to the evaluation of marriage problems. The same shift is observable in the contemporary attempts to determine the role of women in the Church. The tendency to understand the depth of reality as personal is involved in the quest for a deeper theological understanding of the eucharist. The vindication of the personal as a doctrinal category is one of the unrecorded achievements of Vatican II, a reflection of contemporary theology.

Gregory Baum
Commonweal
January 7, 1966

Books Received

yes on the
Modern World
ohn G. Deedy, Jr., Editor
enedy. \$4.95

The constitution on "The Church in the Modern World" promulgated at Vatican II, reflects the degree of insight into the world's agonizing problems that God grants His Church at the moment. But perhaps its deepest significance lies in its unequivocal acknowledgment of the Church's duty to be concerned with the cure or alleviation of the anxieties of all men, everywhere. This is an on-going responsibility of all Christ's followers.

With a view to spelling out this duty the editor invited a team of educated, vocal and observing lay people to discuss some outstanding issues included in schema 13 presented to the Council during the third session. Contributors include Richard Forchler, Michael Novak, Donald Quinn, Sidney Callahan, Adolph Schalk, James Douglas and the distinguished Methodist clergyman, Claude D. Nelson.

While this volume was written before the final text of the constitution was completed, it would be a grave error to underestimate its value. It will be timely and urgent for a long while. The symposium is advanced in a spirit of love for the One True God and concern for the world that is his." And its observations are wise, penetrating and often provocative in the very best sense.

The Christian
and the World
The Canisianum, Innsbruck.
Kenedy. \$4.95

This is the third series of Readings in Theology compiled at Innsbruck. As with previous volumes it represents significant papers by outstanding contemporary theologians.

Alfons Auer treats the change in Christian understanding of the world. The book contains two essays by Karl Rahner. The first is concerned with the relation of Salvation History to world history and how the former interprets the latter. J. B. Metz follows, showing that as God takes the world to Himself in Christ the Christian must reenact this acceptance of the world in faith. Next comes Heinrich Schlier's thoughtful paper on Christ as the predestined Lord of the World.

The Eucharist as a symbol of the World's consecration by Walter Durig is followed by Leo Scheffczyk's exposition of the Incarnation as the "end event." M-D Chenu treats the phrase "consecratio mundi" as meaning "the sanctification of men." H. R. Schlette discusses our responsibility for Christian and social freedom. And the volume concludes with Karl Rahner's widely noted "Christianity and the 'new man'".

The compilers are to be congratulated both on the general topic and the papers selected for inclusion in this volume.

To Hear the Word of God
(Homilies at Mass)
Gerard Sloyan
Herder & Herder. \$4.95

This collection of "Homilies at Mass" reflects the writer's concern to bring the riches of God's word to bear on the needs of particular worshipping congregations. "By definition," he remarks in his foreword, "the homily is particular; it explores the meaning of the word of salvation for these hearers in these circumstances." And the nearly 200 homilies in this book were all addressed to a definite congregation, for most of the Sundays, feast days and the sanctoral cycle.

Father Sloyan's deep involvement in catechetics, liturgy and scripture is widely appreciated. All this—and much more—

makes him an exceedingly attractive and an effective practitioner of the art of the homily. These pages reveal not only his rich, scholarly, priestly background. But they evidence his sense of the value of words, fresh discoveries into the meaning of old texts, quiet humor and feeling for persons and their needs in our times.

It is scarcely necessary to say that these are not "canned" sermons—intended either to be repeated as written or even to supply a leading thought or outline for original development. The author suggests that they might best be read aloud over a period of time in a priest's study. This cumulative impression, enriched by other reading in the many fields of Catholic renewal, would gradually point to authentic Christian goals and how to communicate them for the varying needs of diverse congregations.

It was never easy to preach well, and there are special difficulties in the preparation and delivery of the true homily. The point of view, purpose and method employed in the homily is far removed from even the best preaching of a decade ago. But where a priest is convinced that the Holy Spirit is renewing the Church and tries to keep abreast of this reform, he inevitably endeavors gradually to master the homily. And a meditative reading of this book will surely advance that mastery for many priests.

Pope John
and His Revolution
E. E. Y. Hales
Doubleday \$4.95

The writer's previous books, *The Church and the Modern World* and *Pio Nono*, have won him a secure place as a scholarly historian who writes exceedingly well. This study of Pope John is a delight which will inform and enrich many readers.

He rejects the view that John's importance was greatly exaggerated and that he was basically a well-meaning, simple priest who possessed little grasp of the world's problems and even less realization of the impact they would have on the Council.

He demonstrates that John was truly great and displays the talents and qualities that ripened into authentic greatness. To native intelligence, clearness of vision and

attachment to the simplicities of life and religion, his priesthood brought him a rich and varied experience. His pastoral inclination and activity enabled him, as a diplomat, to view men and events in wide and deep perspective. Thus the supposedly "interim" pope won worldwide influence, universal affection and achieved a long overdue breakthrough in reforming the Church.

With a firm grasp both of the sweep of great events and for the significant details, the writer sketches John's accomplishments. He brings under analysis the great encyclicals; the calling of Vatican II; the sensitive yet, where required, firm guidance of the Council; and his ecumenical goals.

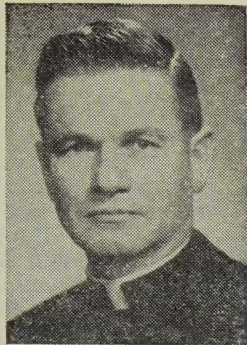
The author sees all this in terms of three frames of reference: "the circle of Catholic unity", "Christian unity" and "the unity of mankind." Along with a profound sense of the accomplishments of his predecessors and a dedication to essential continuity, John combined a determination to break with the past when an old style hindered the Church's contemporary growth and influence.

J.T.M.

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Guide Lights

CATECHESIS AND THE PARISH . . .

A sound catechetical program depends not only upon good content and a nice balance of the basic catechetical elements, but it also owes something to the milieu in which it is conducted. A parish catechumenate draws upon the over-all life of the parish. In places where this life is vigorous and caught up in the tide of renewal, the catechetical apostolate will be that much enriched. Conversely, where the life of the parish is lackluster and unaffected by Vatican II, this work, along with others, will suffer thereby. To put it into commercial parlance, — 'the atmosphere of the store has a lot to do with sales.' However, in the case of the Church, the interaction between parts and whole involves much more than conveying a favorable impression. Parochial spiritual life like personal spirituality is global.

PERSONAL AND PAROCHIAL SPIRITUALITY

Every confessor and spiritual director recognizes the validity of this principle in dealing with individuals. When confronted with a case of wavering faith or a habit of sin, the confessor will often try to direct the penitent's efforts along some other path of spiritual growth, even though this may appear to be sidestepping the immediate problem. The reason, of course, is that the confessor knows that progress in any area of a person's life affects all areas, and that sometimes it is wiser to take the long view and the long way round. This is a familiar pattern and we have no hesitation in applying it to individuals. However, it holds true of the Church generally, and of the parish. The same spiritual treatment can be prescribed for parishes as for individuals. If there is any kind of problem or unsatisfactory situation in the life of the Church anywhere it is bound to be helped by fervent prayer and greater efforts at Christian living. It is as simple and as demanding as that.

VATICAN II'S PRESCRIPTION . . .

When we speak of parish renewal today we are simply using the language of Vatican II describing this very situation. What the Council has done is to specify the content and type of spiritual effort that is called for by the condition of the Church today. The elements of the Christian life that have been pushed to the forefront by the decrees and constitutions of the Council are the dynamisms that in the Council's judgment will strengthen the Church today. That is what renewal means. Catechetical renewal will draw heavily upon all these elements wherever they are at work in a parish.

APOSTOLIC ACTIVITIES . . .

Last month in these pages I mentioned the witness of the laity as being essential to catechesis, and urged their active participation in the apostolate to non-Catholics. However, this by no means limits their contribution to such a program. In view of what has been said above, it should be evident that *all* lay apostolates in the parish will have repercussions on its catechumenate. An active, concerned St. Vincent de Paul Society that breathes the charity of Christ will make that charity felt in some way in every corner of the parish. A dedicated Legion of Mary that brings the presence of Christ into homes of suffering or trial strengthens the catechetical program too, as do the prayers and mission alms of the school children. The people who are actually being prepared for baptism may not have met or even seen any of these lay apostles yet their experience of the Church has to some degree been shaped by their activities.

A VITAL LITURGY . . .

These observations about the lay apostolate are perhaps commonplace, but there are other aspects of parish life whose connection with catechesis may not be so obvious. Liturgy is foremost. I am not speaking here of the direct inclusion of liturgical action in the Catechetical program. That is another and equally important matter, and it is here assumed. However, there is an indirect

but nevertheless important influence that liturgy has upon parish catechetics. Its Liturgy expresses the mystery aspect of the Church in a parish. Here again Vatican II has laid out the lines of modern Christian vitality. The Constitution on the Liturgy relates to this, but even more basically, the Constitution on the Church explains why liturgy is so important. The latter document emphasizes the truth that the Church is a mystery, i.e., she is the effective image of God's reconciling action in Christ. All of Christian life is participation in this mystery. Every activity of the Church and everything in the parish is oriented to this end. The catechetical program aims at bringing new persons for entry into that mystery. The catechumenate is a process of initiation into the mystery and the more present and real that mystery is the more it will exert its attraction and effect upon the catechumen. Because it is a mystery, this effect does not depend entirely upon physical contact between the catechumen and the liturgy, desirable as that is. The presence and action of Christ in mystery is far-reaching and where the mystery is alive in a parish its effects touch all of the parish.

LITURGY VS. RUBRICS . . .

It should be obvious that this emphasis on the Christian mystery has little to do with church architecture and ceremony. These things are important in liturgy for another reason, viz., as symbols and teachers of what they express, and the constitution on the Liturgy sets forth the principles that will get the most mileage out of their powers of communication. But when we speak of mystery and its presence, the importance of forms is only ancillary. Whether or not the altar faces the people, what language is used in the liturgy, the presence or absence of congregational singing,—these are all secondary to the overriding consideration that the Christian mystery be present and alive in the parish. All things being equal the forms of liturgy laid down by Vatican II will undoubtedly abet the awareness of the mystery in the hearts of a congregation, but they do not guarantee it. Good liturgy is not rearranging the rubrics so as to symbolize better what is happening. Rather it is the melding of Christ in mystery with a community responsive to Him. Good rubrics may or may not help. They should, but this does not always happen. If it doesn't, it might be better to stick with other rubrics that do, at least until a parish reaches liturgical maturity.

EUCCHARISTIC PIETY . . .

In many parishes the new liturgy has temporarily disturbed the symbiosis between the parish and the Christian mystery. The latter is present, of course, but static is interfering with its reception by the former. Good preaching, strong charity, patience and time should eliminate this. However, we live in an imperfect world and one or more of these healing agents could be lacking in any given parish. In such situations, the best liturgy might well be found in Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Forty Hours or other traditional forms of Eucharistic piety. Forty Hours may be a static form of Christ's presence and the Mass liturgy a more dynamic one, but there is nothing static about the presence itself.

THE OVER-ALL PICTURE . . .

This liturgical lesson is only illustrative. The truth it is designed to illustrate is that healthy parish life depends upon a nice balance of all of the core elements of Christianity. Vatican II happened because this balance was not always preserved. It would be a shame if the means chosen by the Council to achieve this balance were applied in such a way as to create a new imbalance. If the measures proposed by Vatican II are carried out in their entirety in a parish this will not happen. The Council has treated every major aspect of Christian life and all of these will work together unto good. The application of all of these teachings will renew a parish and everything in it to the enrichment and fruition of each. In our particular concern, — the parish catechumenate,—the parish liturgical life will be of immense effect. It can bring to the entire parish a vivid awareness and living out of the saving Christian mystery. This is bound to touch the lives of those not of the Church.

In the same way the lives of the men and women of that parish, their charitable and other apostolic activities and concerns strengthen the inner life of the parish as well as enhance its public image. Scriptural preaching that brings the Word of God into the lives of the parishioners will quicken the life of the parish and give it its own vital Christian style. In sum, there is nothing significant in a parish that will not affect one way or another the parish catechetical program. That is why our efforts in every department are well spent, for in the Church, St. Paul reminds us, all things work together unto good.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.

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and _____

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Baptized in the _____ Church

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on the _____ day of _____ 19____

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